

AVOID COMMON OFFICE INJURIES

It is generally accepted that in heavy industry, you'll find dangerous work environments that expose employees to potential injury. But fewer companies recognize the potential risks found in everyday office environments. Office work, too, can lead to injuries if appropriate safe work practices are not followed. Learn to avoid these common hazards:

1. Musculoskeletal strains and sprains associated with material handling: If you must walk and carry an object, make sure the object is carried in a way that avoids blocking your vision. Never lift objects that are too heavy to handle comfortably. Get help, or use a hand truck when moving heavy or large objects. Lift objects from the floor correctly by using proper lifting mechanics--hold the load close to your body. Use a stool or step ladder when placing or removing items from high shelves.

2. Stress and strain associated with sitting and VDT use: Arrange your desk or work station so that your arms, wrists, legs, back and neck can be maintained in a comfortable "neutral" position, with proper back support. (Eagle can provide ergonomic checklists for evaluating your work area.) Those who spend long hours at a computer should consider mastering keyboard moves, instead of relying principally on the mouse. This helps reduce strain on your elbow and shoulder. And don't forget to take rest breaks!

3. Injuries that result from slips, trips, and falls: Never run in the office. If liquids are spilled on tile or linoleum floors, clean them up immediately. If a rolling chair pad is cracked or if any part of the pad edge is curled upward, replace it and eliminate the tripping hazard. Do not lay electrical cords or phone cords where they could create a tripping hazard. Keep aisles clear of stored items.

4. Hand injuries from cuts, scrapes, smashes, and punctures: Use a letter opener when opening envelopes and boxes, and a staple puller when removing staples from documents. Wear a rubber finger "cot" when fingering through a significant amount of envelopes or pieces of paper. Store sharp objects neatly in desk drawers or inside closed containers. Always close desk and file cabinet drawers with your hand firmly gripped on the drawer handle--and leave repair of office equipment to the maintenance people.

Although offices are not considered to be "high hazard" work environments, injuries happen when risks are not controlled or when people get careless. Practice safe work habits at all times. Know where the office first aid kit is kept, and who has been trained to administer first aid. Lastly, make sure you understand the emergency procedures for dealing with fires, earthquakes, tsunamis, and power failures.